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ABSTRACT

Intended for parents and others caring for young children, this viewer's guide and videotape leads adults along the path of child's language acquisition and demonstrates how to use a language-rich environment to communicate with infants, toddlers, and preschool children in ways to foster language development. The first half of the guide presents an overview of the videotape and specific viewing objectives. Suggested discussion questions and research activities are also given. The remainder of the guide highlights stages in language development, elements of child-directed speech or "baby talk," and potential problems in language development. The accompanying videotape elaborates on 6 stages of language development, from early sound and babbling to core grammatical and vocabulary development, and discusses factors that may influence this development, such as personality or parenting styles. The remainder of the videotape demonstrates several ways parents and caregivers can help young children develop language: child-directed speech or "baby talk"; indirect correction of child's grammatical errors; language tour guide (e.g., naming articles in the grocery store or while dressing); language play; interactive reading; attention to environmental print; rhyming; and word games; moderate use of television; improving interactions, and most importantly, making time to talk with the child. (HTH)

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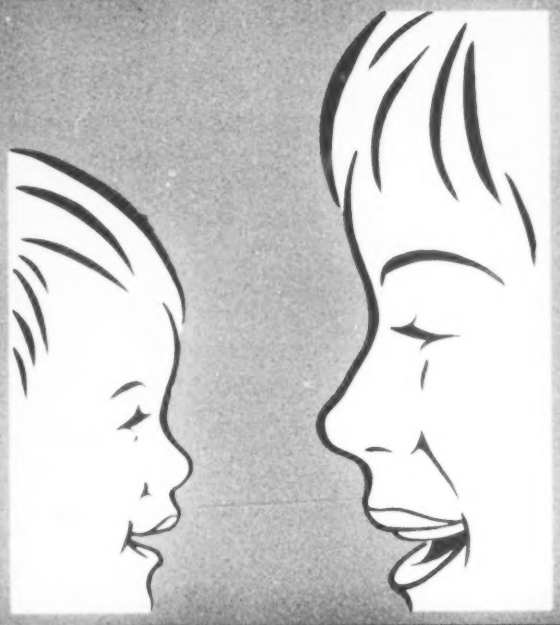
CHILDREN LEARNING LANGUAGE



How Adults Can Help

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Study Guide

Children Learning Language: How Adults Can Help

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Contents

Children Learning Language: How Adults Can Help contains a 24 minute videotape and this guide, which owners of this program may duplicate for classroom use only. Catalog Number 212. ISBN 0-917159-78-0

Overview

Help infants, toddlers, and preschoolers communicate. Naomi Baron, author of ***Growing Up With Language: How Children Learn to Talk*** (Addison Wesley, 1992), guides viewers along a child's journey from babbling to complex sentences. She shows how parents and caregivers can create a language-rich environment that stimulates competency. The video explains:

- Why caregivers suddenly begin speaking a new dialect (known as Babytalk) to their newborns.
- How caregivers can correct language errors without discouraging kids from trying.
- How to turn everyday activities like getting dressed and going shopping into wonderful opportunities for language growth -- and make it fun. After all, language IS child's play.
- How to speak to a child in a stimulating way.
- How to read to a child so the book becomes a creative conversation.
- What caregivers in noisy crowded child care centers can do to enrich language learning.
- How to play word games that children enjoy, and why you must sometimes expect kids to play not only with words, but with the rules of the game.
- How children in non-English speaking homes best learn English.
- How television and computers enhance and sometimes hinder language development.
- How to assess articulation problems and stuttering.

Objectives

After viewing ***Children Learning Language: How Adults Can Help*** and studying the accompanying handouts, viewers will understand:

- Why a rich language background is important to a child's development.
- Six milestones in children's language development.
- Five factors that influence the age and manner in which a child speaks.
- How a caregiver can provide a child with an enriching language background.
- Characteristics of a strong multi-lingual program in schools.
- The impact of television and computers on language learning.
- Problems in language development such as articulation problems and stuttering.
- Problems in adult - child interaction and how to resolve them.

Before Showing This Tape

Explain that the letter "c" appears before children's ages. The "c" stands for the Latin word *circa*, which means "around." For example, "c 6 - 12 months" means "around six to 12 months."

Suggested Questions for Discussion

1. Why is an enriching language background important to a child?
During the first six years, the brain pathways are established for first and second language learning.

2. Naomi Baron tells a story about a father in a waiting area who never spoke with his child. Discuss this incident. Tell students that when the mother joined the father and baby she also failed to talk to the child. Do students think this is common? Why?
Research indicates that teenage parents speak less to their children than older and more educated parents. Teenage parents often do not have rich life experiences and educational background that give adults a lot to say to children.

3. Duplicate and discuss the six stages in children's language development printed on page 8-9 of this guide.

4. Name some reasons children differ in the age and manner in which they start to speak.

5. Discuss baby talk. Duplicate and discuss the hand-out on page 10.
Which examples help an adult feel connected with children?
Which examples are a kind of teaching?

6. How should a parent or caregiver correct a child's grammatical errors?
Don't say, "You said that wrong."
Incorporate the correction into your response.
If a child says "I goed home" say "Oh, you went home yesterday."
Children hear and learn gradually. Grammatically correct

4 Children Learning Language

language takes time to develop. Children eventually correct their own errors.

7. Judging from the scenes in the videotape, what did Todd and Amy's parents do to enrich their children's language learning?

Watched television with them and talked about what they saw.
Read books and used "wh" questions (who, where, why etc.)
Joined in their play
Talked to them in a rewarding way during everyday activities
Engaged in word play (e.g., with opposites or rhymes)
Referred to written words during conversations

8. Discuss how Molly's mom was an effective "language tour guide" in this exchange at the grocery store:

Molly: Take that home!
Mom: This is a pineapple. Can you say pineapple?
Molly: Pineapple.
MOM: Feel it. Is it kind of prickly?
Molly: Yea.
MOM: Is it heavy? Hold it...

Molly's mother taught the word "pineapple" and had Molly repeat it. She used the imaginative adjective "prickly" and taught the word by having Molly experience just what "prickly" is. She also helped Molly experience what "heavy" means.

9. Duplicate and discuss pages 11-12 , "Problems in Language Development."

Research Activities

1. Prepare a report on why language development is important to a child.

2. Survey parents who have both male and female children.
Ask if their sons or daughters started speaking earlier.
Ask how they see heredity influencing their children's language development.

3. Interview parents from a culture that is different from your own. Ask them if there are "unspoken rules" regarding adult-child communication.

4. Play the rhyming game and opposite game with a child. Have younger children give only one example for each rhyming word.
I say bed; you say...(red)
I say car; you say (far)
Record your exchange with the children and discuss your observations with the class.

5. Read a book to a child and use questions with who, what, where, when, how or why to engage her in conversation. Describe to your class how the child responded.

6. Observe a bi-lingual program at a local elementary school. Try to answer these questions in a report to your class:
Are the children becoming fluent in English?
While at school do children speak English when they are outside their classrooms?
What support programs outside of formal English classes are being used to help children develop conversational skills?

7. Identify and play some children's computer games that encourage early literacy. Evaluate them and report to your class.

8. Observe adult-child communication in a child care center.
Do the children hear language addressed to them individually?
Do the teachers encourage individual responses from the children?
What suggestions would you make for improving the language learning environment at the center?

Stages in Language Development

① **Early Sounds Birth to c. 6 months**	Cries, gurgles, squeals Cooing begins around 3 months.
② **Babbling c. 6 - 12 months**	Sounds organized into meaningless syllables. Child experiments with tongue, teeth, and lips to produce sounds. Some children stop babbling when they begin using identifiable words; others mix babbling with meaningful speech for several months.
③ **One Word Utterances c. 9 - 14 months**	First identifiable words. Some children begin speaking in phrases ("All gone"), but in the child's mind the phrase is equivalent to a single word.
④ **Two-Word Combinations c. 18-30 months**	Most children begin combining words between 18 and 30 months. Typical combinations include adjective plus noun (e.g. "big ball") or verb plus noun (e.g. "want cookie").

⑤

Core Grammatical Development
c. 24 months - 5 years

During the next 3-4 years children master most of the sound system, learn thousands of words, and gain control over most grammatical constructions.

⑥

Continuing Language Development
c. 5 years plus

Children learn the final details of sound, grammar, and meaning. (e.g., children finally master the use of w, l, and r; the use of irregular plural nouns and past tense verbs such as children and went).

Child Directed Speech or "Baby Talk"

SOUND

Higher pitch than normal language addressed to adults
Louder volume
Slower rate of speech
Clearer pronunciation
Emphasis on one or two words in a sentence
Echo child's incorrect pronunciation

MEANING

Substitutions (*choo choo* instead of *train*)
Diminutives (*kitty* for *cat*)
Echoing child's invented words (using a child's onomatopoetic name of *ish* for *water*)
Coining nonstandard words (labeling a pigeon a *pigeon-bird*)

GRAMMAR

Grammatically simple utterances
Short utterances
Use of nouns in place of pronouns ("Daddy wants Alex to brush his teeth.")
Intentional ungrammatical usage ("No eat!")

CONVERSATION

Restricted topics (Generally limited to the present, immediate past, or very near future)
Both questions and answers given by adult ("Shall we change your diaper now? Yes? O.K.")
More questions, fewer declarative statements
Repetition of own utterances ("Would you like some cheese? Would you like some cheese?")

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Problems in Language Development

Some children don't talk very much. That may or may not indicate a real language problem. Speech-language therapists speak of some children having **specific language impairment**, which means they are slow to talk. A number of children will outgrow the problem, but others will need speech-language therapy.

Another possibility when children are slow to talk is that they don't hear much language in the home. We can't expect children to develop a solid linguistic base if they don't have a rich model.

Here are five ways a caretaker can assess a child's language development:

① **Conduct an informal hearing test .**
Build on words you think the child knows.
"I'm going to say a word. You say the same thing back to me."
If the child can't repeat the word, it may be because he or she can't hear you. It's very important to get children's hearing tested if you suspect any problems. Children who have had many ear infections are prone to temporary hearing loss, which can affect language learning.

② **Observe the child when he thinks you aren't there**
Sometimes a child will talk when no one is around and not talk very much when other people are present.

③ **Check what the child understands.**
Try commands. Say to the child, "Please bring me the box that's on the sofa." Make sure there is another item, such as a book, on the sofa as well. If the child brings you the

wrong item, he or she may not understand what you are saying.

④ **Understand the home language situation**.
Determine what kind of language-- and how much is used in the home. Do the adults speak English? Do they speak it fluently? Is there much conversation (in any language) in the home? Much play with language (e.g. rhymes, language-based jokes)?

⑤ **Answer these questions:**

- At what age did the child enter each of the 6 stages of language development? Is it on the early side or the late side? If late, how late?

- How much does the child talk? Did she do a lot of babbling as an infant?

- How often does she put words together? Very often? Infrequently? Does she put more than two words together?

A Case Study
A three-year-old was slow to do a lot of active language production. His nursery school teacher was convinced the child was language delayed because he never talked in class. One day the child's mother was late in picking him up. While the teacher was busy tidying the room, all of a sudden the child began reading aloud the alphabet banner that was mounted on one wall.
The teacher had never heard him speak this much in six months. Obviously the child was developing language, but apparently didn't like to talk spontaneously when others were around.

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